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# RELEASE THE RESENTMENT; FORGIVE!

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Sermon | Luke 17:1-10 | Pentecost 17



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## **Release the Resentment; Forgive!**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

This morning's sermon is drawn from the Gospel according to Luke.

May the Lord continue to grant us faith—and ever increase it through His Word and Sacraments—that we may forgive others, just as He has commanded us. Amen.

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A late-night pub once hosted an *after-hours* party, featuring *celebrity models* serving as barmaids. A group of men—all stags—walked in after midnight and ordered a few drinks. Around two in the morning, one of the celebrity barmaids realized the alcohol had run out.

She informed them politely. They kept asking for more. She said, "There isn't any.' They became rude.

One of them pulled out a .22 caliber pistol and fired a round to intimidate her. She continued to refuse, calmly and respectfully. Then, suddenly, in a moment of frenzy, the man shot her in the head. The woman collapsed and died instantly.

She was the only child of her parents. They went into a bitter shock. Their world shattered. Their grief was unimaginable. Several questions flooded their minds. Why her? Why them? Why death?

The man who killed this woman was the son of a member of parliament. High-profile, affluent, he had elite connections, and a prominent social standing. The court of justice gave him four years in prison. But the woman's parents chose not to pursue a legal battle. Instead, they did something few could imagine.

They *released* their resentment. They *forgave* their daughter's killer.

*Now, this* is a story. And as a storyteller, I have the liberty to write such accounts of forgiveness.

But in real life, we all know—forgiveness doesn't come naturally. It's not easy to forgive. The deep-seated emotional resentment, fanned by our old sinful Adam, almost always seeks vengeance. A tooth for a nail. One sinful act answered by another, as if our pain could justify our retaliation.

This is precisely why Jesus warns His disciples. Let us listen again to His words in Luke 17:3. Jesus says to His disciples: "*Beware, Pay attention to yourselves.*"

First, He tells them that temptations to sin are sure to come (Luke 17:1).

Then comes His command—both instruction and warning:” *Beware! Be watchful for yourselves.*”

Jesus knows we live in a dying world. God in flesh, Jesus—as true man—experienced the temporal life in this fallen world. He knows that we are all *dying to live*.

Each of us hopes to have our crack at life, even as we walk through the brokenness that surrounds us—in our fragile bodies, fractured and unkempt relationships, and aching hearts that long for wholeness.

Temptations to sin will come. But the greater danger lies within!

Jesus’ warning is not only about the sin around us—it’s about the sin within us. “Pay attention to yourselves” is not a suggestion; it is a command. For Jesus knows that the old Serpent still whispers in our ears. And with every hiss, the old Adam in us is stirred to retaliate.

How easy it is for the Devil to convince us that Avengers are not just comic book characters. We too can—and—must avenge!

But Jesus gives us His promises through His saints. And as Saint Paul writes in Romans, “*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*”

And this is what Jesus calls us to do. He wants us to forgive!

Jesus doesn’t want us to keep the resentment buried in our hearts. He wants us to *release* it.

- Jesus commands us to let go of our material attachment when our own family members deceive us—when inheritance is stolen, when trust is broken.

- Jesus instructs us to release the bitterness when a close friend betrays us—when loyalty is shattered.
- Jesus calls us to forgive the child who rebelled against us, the brother who always ridiculed us, the sister who never cared for us.
- Jesus asks us to release the anger when we are falsely accused—at work, or even in our homes.
- Jesus invites us to release the pain when we are overlooked, dismissed, or forgotten—even by those we love most.

Jesus commands us to forgive because it *heals* us. It's like a miracle that restores broken relationships. Forgiving others works like medicine—it cures us of the disease called *vengeance*—and it works not only within us, but also in those we forgive.

But to our surprise, Jesus heightens the degree of forgiveness.

If you recollect from the Gospel reading, Jesus commanded His disciples to forgive an individual *seven times in a single day!* And when His apostles heard this, they cried out to Him, "*O Lord, increase our faith!*" (Luke 17:5)

They realized, how near impossible it is—for anyone—to forgive the same person seven times in one day. It's not just difficult; it seems so unnatural.

Who among us wouldn't feel exhausted, sceptical, or even resentful?

We often fail to forgive others *even once*—and harbour bitterness for a lifetime.

Think for a moment.

Is there someone in your thoughts whom you haven't forgiven? Not for hours, but for days, months or even years?

We must admit— *'forgiving'* doesn't come easy.

And this is why the apostles pleaded with Jesus to grant them *'increased faith!'* Forgiveness requires more than willpower. It requires *faith*. And Jesus has provisioned us with His Word and Sacraments to increase our faith.

- Faith that Christ has forgiven us first—not once, not for a single sin, but for all my sins since birth.
- Forgiveness requires faith, that Jesus will strengthen us to forgive others—not just once, but again, and again, and again.

When we forgive others, we release the sinful urge to seek revenge. We surrender the burden of bitterness. We handover the case to the only Judge who is both just and merciful. And in doing so, we are set free. Free from the poison of hatred.

Free as the obedient Son of God the Father, Jesus, who prayed while hanging on the cross, drenched in blood and covered in mockery, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (Luke 23:34)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Release the resentment. Forgive!

Now may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Him. Amen.

Vijay Samuel

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